

NEW FRONTIERS

• PERIODICAL STUDIES IN ECONOMICS AND POLITICS •

What is Folksocialism?

(A Critical Analysis)

By PAUL SERING



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY SIDNEY HOOK



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WHAT IS FOLKSOCIALISM?

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BY

PAUL SERING

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TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

HARRIET YOUNG AND MARY FOX

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BOOK REVIEWS

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IN offering What Is Folksocialism? as an issue of NEW FRONTIERS, the Editorial Board brings to the socialist and labor movement of the United States a valuable addition to theoretical discussion of a specific problem which faces the movement here as well as abroad. Dr. Sering analyzes the program of a section of the German-Social Democratic movement, but when due allowance is made for the particular local problems of the German movement, there remains a valuable discussion and analysis of a tendency which has appeared in many countries in various forms, as fascist aggression has increased and reactionary capitalism has become bolder. The fact that the cult of "the people" has been furthered not only by right wing liberals who have always been opposed to Marxism but by the Communist parties throughout the world, brings forward anew the problem of how the working class can assume leadership and win power—the problem of the nature of alliances;—in short, the whole question of the road to power. Thoughtful consideration of these problems will be aided, we think, by the direct way in which Dr. Sering faces the problems in his own movement.

We are deeply indebted to Dr. Kate Frankenthal and Franz Hollering for their aid in the translation and editing.

We wish to express our appreciation to the editors of Zeitschrift fur Sozialismus for permission to use this brochure which originally appeared in their issues of September, 1936.

MARY FOX

Introduction

DESPITE the great natural barriers which separate the Americas from Europe, every major wind of doctrine in the European socialist movement has blown its spores and germinal ideas across the sea. Regrettable or not, this is a fact as much in evidence today as it was already in the mid forties of the 19th century when Marx and Engels followed the American careers of Kriege and Weitling with uneasy interest. Of the various factors which account for the diffusion of socialist ideas, two are of primary importance. The first is the international character of the problems which confront the working class movement throughout the world. These are derived, naturally enough, from the international economy of capitalism itself. They become focal whenever, in large strike situations, capital seeks to play off the workers of one country against another; whenever it is a question of carrying on effective anti-war activities which obviously demand international organization; and, most important of all, whenever the threat of foreign intervention is directed against a working class which comes to power or is preparing to do so.

The other important factor in the diffusion of socialist ideas has been the existence of actual international, working class organizations. Since 1847, and despite serious lapses into nationalism on the part of important sections, there have always been groups of socialists, more or less loosely bound together, who have interpreted events and formulated objectives from the perspective of the working class movement as a whole.

Rarely more than an influential minority, these groups have retained a critical fidelity to the methods and theories of Marxism, learning from experience because they have brought something to experience, and mediating between dogmatic sectarianism and unprincipled opportunism. Under different party labels at different times, they have represented, so to speak, the principle of continuity in revolutionary socialism. Especially has this been the case in periods of defeat and retreat when many of their fair-weather camp-followers

could not distinguish between the necessary revaluation of strategy and tactics, always in order after failure, and the abandonment of the socialist objective itself.

The catastrophic defeats of the German, Italian and Austrian working class, the menace of fascism in Spain, France and other political democracies have led to a searching of hearts and a re-examination of first principles by all intelligent socialists. It is a fond maxim of socialist thought that the nature of a thing, as well as the validity of any policy, is to be judged by its fruits. In the light of their tragic fruits, the policies pursued by the major political parties of the left must be condemned. The analysis of the causes of failure, however, is politically relevant only insofar as it bears upon the possibility of ultimate success in these and other countries. That is why it would be foolish and dangerous for us in America either blindly to imitate the patterns of thought and action shaping themselves in the European working class movement or to be indifferent to them.

The most powerful, and, superficially, the most plausible variety of political revisionism which has emerged in the European working class movement as a consequence of recent history is the doctrine of "a people's socialism." "Popular frontism," when advocated as a method by which the decline of capitalism can be checked and the way prepared for socialism, is a variant of this doctrine. Those who hold the doctrine do not reject the ideal of socialism but only of the Marxian method of achieving it. Indeed, it is precisely the traditional Marxian "dogmas," they maintain, which prevent the achievement of socialism and prepare the way for fascism. Of these "dogmas" the two which offend most are the belief that the movement towards socialism must be based primarily upon the working class; and the belief that the working class of every country, without neglecting the problems on its own doorstep, must orient itself internationally. Once abandon—so they say—the class character of the socialist movement and broaden it into a people's front and there will be an immediate accession of new strength from all classes except the handful of financial oligarchs. Once abandon—so they say—the will o' the wisp of a vague and thin internationalism for a rich and vibrant nationalism more closely in accord with the feelings of "the people" and the ground is cut from under demagogic fascism.

There is no denying the fact that, in the past, Marxian parties have

sadly neglected the study of psychologically effective techniques of persuasion. This has partly been the result of, and partly the cause of, a confusion between two propositions: (1) "the working class and its mass organizations must be the basis of the socialist movement," and (2) "the working class by itself can win power and achieve socialism." Justifiably rejecting the latter proposition, the upholders of "people's socialism" unjustifiably reject the former and convert the socialist movement into another movement of capitalist reform.

The great merit of Paul Sering's analysis is that it establishes the fact that the abandonment of the working class base of the socialist movement means, on *every decisive class issue*, the abandonment of the socialist ideal itself.

Two powerful lines of argument lead to this conclusion. The first, drawn from a study of the tendencies of capitalist production, proves that, both in periods of relative prosperity and depression, as well as in moments of political crisis, different alternatives of action are always present which correspond with the different interests of the owning and working classes. General formulas merely serve to conceal the opposition of interests; they cannot eliminate it. Where this opposition is concealed—which is tantamount to denying the existence of the class struggle—socialists find themselves committed in practice to the strange program of defending capitalist policies in behalf of "all the people" or "national interests." The second argument is historical. Every "people's socialist movement" in the past, whether it be the Narodniki or Social Revolutionary Party or the present people's front governments, have either been polarized under the impact of events into right and left wings reflecting the major class antagonisms or have frankly shelved their ultimate program in order to defend the status quo.

A "people's front" government (which must not be confused with a "united front" government of working class parties) cannot take the first decisive step towards socialism or even towards a *vigorous* defense against actual or potential fascism without becoming a predominantly working class government. Allies, of course, it must have from all sections of the population. These can be won by showing that only the program of working class action towards socialism enables other socially productive groups, farmers, intellectuals and professionals, to solve their own problems.

Another noteworthy feature of Sering's pamphlet is his contention that, far from being a liability, the internationalism of the working class movement is the only defense against the internationalism of the capitalist class which is most in evidence where the workers of any country are about to take power. Labor internationalism, therefore, is the only guarantee that the socialist state of any country will not be destroyed by the overt or hidden force of other capitalist states. If, as Marxists believe, the most basic issues of foreign politics, as of domestic politics, are ultimately class issues, the socialist movement cannot sacrifice its internationalism without surrendering its class standpoint and therewith the principled struggle for socialism.

Perhaps the most impressive conclusion which emerges from Sering's study is that there is an organic connection between socialist objectives and an organizational strategy based upon the leadership of the working class in the international struggle against fascism. Just as a "people's front," *without* class orientation, has a fatal tendency to develop into a "national front" *with* a class orientation (but one directed against the working class) so a "people's socialism" already contains the virulent germs of "national socialism." And lest it be thought that the tendencies here criticized by Sering are restricted to the followers of Otto Strasser in the fascist camp and to some isolated figures, not the less dangerous for being well intentioned, in the Socialist Party of Germany, I wish to show by documentary citation that these are the officially authorized tendencies of the Communist parties of Germany and Italy. In *International Press Correspondence*, (Oct. 24, 1936, Vol. 16, No. 48) an official organ of the Comintern, we read: "In order to facilitate the fraternization of all Italians, the C.P. of Italy declares that it adopts as its own the fascist program of 1919 which is a program of freedom and is prepared to fight for it" (p. 1305, italics in the original). And again, "Communists must support those fascist leaders who, wholly or partially, undertake the defense of the interests of the mass of the people" (p. 1304). Similar sentiments are expressed by the Communist Party of Germany (See p. 1302).

One can be grateful for the many brilliant ideas contained in Sering's pamphlet without agreeing with all of them. His position on war, for example, is puzzling in its ambiguities. It is certainly true, as he says, that, in case of war there will be only two fronts that German

socialists can recognize: "For Hitler or against Hitler?" But is this not also true for German socialists in times of peace? If Sering's advice is directed to socialists throughout the world in case of war, it is a dangerous simplification and borders closely on the views he has so ably criticized.

There will be many more fronts on which socialists will have to fight besides the anti-Hitler front. They will have to fight not only against the foreign Hitler regime but against the domestic Hitler regime which will take power as soon as any capitalist country becomes embroiled in war. As in the last war, each government will say that the enemy of the working class is in the *other* country, that it is fighting for culture, civilization, democracy and what not. The great lesson learned from the last war is that only a working class government can be trusted to fulfill the interests of the working class and its allies. "National Fronts" and "national governments" are not above classes. They are class governments and very class-conscious governments at that. In the next war as in the last, a support of such a "national front" will mean the betrayal of socialist principles.

Before long European socialists will face another 1914!

If and when they do, it will not be long before American socialists face another 1917!

To meet the occasion with the proper knowledge, organization and objectives, the study *now* of the problems Paul Sering discusses is essential.

SIDNEY HOOK

WHAT IS FOLKSOCIALISM?

(A Critical Analysis)

By PAUL SERING

THE German socialist workers' movement is now attempting, after an unprecedented collapse and under unprecedented difficulties, to rebuild its organizations and to renew its teachings. In the face of the disaster that has befallen the movement a new theoretical trend has developed in the German Socialist Party of Czechoslovakia. This is the thesis that Socialism in present day Germany can be revived only as Folksocialism—that the necessary revival of Socialism will not depend on the reaffirmation of the doctrine of the class struggle or the recognition of the working class as the sole instrument for winning Socialism; that the task ahead is not the rebuilding of the workers' movement but the development of a socialistic people's movement.

The opposition group within the Nazi National Socialist movement, led by Otto Strasser, is a prototype of this "classless" Folksocialism. Folksocialism represents a transition on the part of some members of the former workers' movement toward a "left" National Socialism. Obviously this tendency is developed and consciously recognized in varying degrees by its different representatives. It finds adherents among the responsible officials of the former workers' movements who are developing Folksocialist thought in an earnest effort toward reorientation and among a small middle group which calls itself the Folksocialist Movement and consciously aims at the defeat of the former workers' movements.

Finally it has the support of Strasser himself who welcomes the other groups as allies. This type of socialism is suggested in articles by Wilhelm Sollman;* and again in the book of the German-Czechoslovakian Social Democrat, Jaksch, where it is formulated as a program for the change from Proletarian Socialism to Folksocialism. Emil Franzel, former associate editor of the daily *Social Democrat* in Prague, presents in his book, *The Revolution of the West*, an historical and philosophical argument for the complete abandonment

*For 22 years the editor of "Rheinische Zeitung"; member of the German Reichstag for eight periods, from 1920 till 1933; former German Secretary of Interior in two Cabinets.

of the workers' (class struggle) movement as such. The advocates of Folksocialism all try to maintain a contact with the tradition of the workers' movement and with a strange and disorted ideology which they call Marxism. On the other hand the anonymous Folksocialist movement openly asserts the bankruptcy of Marxist and the workers' movement.

Strasser, in a new addition of his *Program*, cites with approval Jaksch and Franzel. He reprints articles by Sollman and Franzel in his weekly newspaper and defends Franzel's book against Socialist critics. Using these writers to support his point of view he advocates the conversion of German Socialism to his platform. He declares that German Social Democracy ought to reject the idea of an internationally oriented people's front grouped around a united workers' movement; that it ought to break with the Internationals and decide in favor of his own projected "national front."

We agree with the advocates of Folksocialism that after the experiences of the last 20 years a thoroughly new orientation of European socialism is necessary. But our conclusions from these experiences point in an entirely different direction. We hold fast to the conviction that socialism in Germany can be achieved only under the leadership of an independent, unified and strongly organized workers' movement and in alliance with all the forces of international socialism. We must therefore deal with the development of Folksocialism as with the invasion of our ranks by an inimical political ideology.

Up to this point the discussion between the Folksocialists and Marxian socialists has not sufficiently stated the problems of the new political orientation. Only the examination of the ideology of Folksocialism in the light of political experience, only the critical analysis of what Folksocialism indicates as a new program, can clarify what this program really means. Its ambiguous historical and philosophical implications receive a unified meaning only when viewed in political perspective.

I. THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

THE conditions under which the European workers' movement today struggles and the tasks which confront it are completely different from those under which it has developed through the decades as a mass movement. Those conditions led to the German catastrophe of 1933. From that catastrophe came the necessity of a fundamentally new orientation.

The modern workers' movement developed first in the frame-work of democratic revolutionary movements, later in relatively stable parliamentary democracies. Its concrete aims for a long period were either democratic-revolutionary or purely reformist. In spite of all national differences its fundamental character as a legal mass movement within the framework of the bourgeois state was common for the movement in all European countries. Parliamentary and trade unionist procedures and democratic and reformist day-to-day aims determined its pattern. Socialism was only the ideal continuation of this activity into a remote future—a final goal—whether it was imagined as the result of an indefinite future revolution or of an indefinite long evolution.

The system of parliamentary bourgeois democracy for which the workers' movement in many lands struggled and within which it was established, has been in crisis since the shock of the world war and the modern developments of capitalist contradictions in one land after another. The crisis of the state makes the problems of power actual. In one country after another the alternative between fascist and socialist rule presents itself. For the first time the workers' movement has an opportunity to secure the development towards Socialism through the conquest of power; for the first time, also, it is facing the danger of losing democratic rights already won.

The development of the Russian Revolution was the first sign of the new epoch. The victory of Italian fascism was the second. Both signs might have been interpreted as the results of a temporary post-war crisis and as the peculiar fates of backward agricultural countries. Such a misinterpretation has become impossible since world economic crisis has made the crisis of democracy general. And the victory of fascism in the most industrially developed country of Europe has appeared as a third significant sign of the new epoch.

In the fifteen years between the Russian Revolution and the German catastrophe the European workers' movement has not achieved the necessary adaptation to the new tasks. This adaptation demands in fact a fundamental change of purpose, organization and strategy as well as the development of new leadership. For the most part the European workers' movement has not achieved the necessary reorientation or the concretizing of its goals, nor has it realized the actuality of the struggle for power. It has seen only the alternatives of parliamentary opposition or parliamentary collaboration. It has clung to the old methods of merely defending its interests and has ignored the broader problems of socialist development to the critical situation of which it was blind. Even the communist minority which influenced by the Russian revolution, had split from the established movement and could not achieve any real change of organization and strategy. Above all none of these dependent parties could create for themselves a leadership sufficiently authoritative to solve the strategical problems of the struggle for power under European conditions.

The recognition of the necessity for a fundamental change had begun to assert itself after the world economic crisis and became more evident in the general movement after 1933. The need of socialistic solutions; and a policy of alliances based not on a temporary parliamentary goal, but on a permanent conquest of power and change of society, are today generally recognized. Even when their necessity has been realized, the difficulties of adaptation are tremendous. This adaptation demands not only a recognition of fundamental factors, but also the remaking of the general movement from the ground up and the solution of unprecedented political and organizational problems. Even the victory of the Russian Revolution cannot supply a precedent in certain significant points because a number of important circumstances in present day Europe differ from those of Russia in 1917.

In Russia the decisive struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie followed immediately after a democratic revolution against absolutism. In Europe a similar situation can be repeated in a crisis in a fascist country. Where fascism still must be prevented the task is to seize power in the crisis of an old democracy. In Russia the largest and most important non-proletarian element—the peasantry—was drawn to the side of the proletariat because the

agrarian revolution had become acute at that time. No where in Europe except Spain have the questions of the agrarian revolution had such a decisive importance. The necessary alliance with non-proletarian elements must therefore rest on another basis. In Russia the state machinery had become rotten; the industrial machinery had still relatively little importance in the life of the country; in the industrially developed European countries the interrelation of highly developed state and economic machinery presents new problems for Socialist seizure of power. In Russia the new state power could maintain itself for years in opposition to the capitalist states surrounding it because it controlled a tremendous territory rich in soil and natural resources. Isolated, no other European country not similarly isolated could have withstood such great pressure.

These problems have often been brought forward, to prove the impossibility of a decisive revolutionary struggle in present-day Europe. The more clear it becomes that this struggle is inevitable, the more evident it is that the solution of these problems is a vital matter for the workers' movement. Around these questions centers all the recent developments of theory and organization in the workers' movement. The conquest of power in the crisis of democracy demands the breaking through of the narrow bounds of special interests, so that a workers' party will justify its leadership of the nation as a whole. Seizure of power without the help of an agrarian revolution requires a new clarification of the problems of alliances concretely worked out for each country. To destroy a highly developed machinery of oppression, and to take over a highly developed governmental and private economic apparatus demands careful technical and organizational preparation. The division of the European continent into hostile camps, the dangerous position of any Socialist government in a single country makes necessary the merging of struggles within nations in a general European war for freedom.

The movements based on economic planning in some democratic countries and the peoples' front movements in others, the new attempts at the solution of organizational problems and particularly those where the movement is underground are important beginnings toward partial solutions of the new problems. The ideas of Folk-socialism have grown out of the same general problems. As a matter of fact its representatives are strongly influenced by the effects of the

German collapse. They differ from all other attempts at a new orientation in this—that they think that the necessary adaptation is impossible in the framework of the workers' movement. They desert in the face of the tremendous difficulties which this adaptation certainly presents, to an apparently easier solution outside of the workers' movement.

II. SOCIALISM, CLASS INTEREST AND THE PEOPLE

THE workers' movement of the previous epochs limited itself to the winning of specific gains, took its own development for granted and did not seize power. The Folksocialists blame this failure upon the fact that it was a movement of one class only—the working class. They claim that the class movement is too narrow for the Socialist goal; that the Marxist doctrine which based Socialism on the movement of the working class is too narrow—that is the political basis for all Folksocialistic criticism of Marxism. The German defeat is the proof of this: Marxian Socialism must fail because of its class limitations. This has always been the political core of all idealistic criticism of Marxian materialism.

The overwhelming majority of the working and, in a general way anti-capitalist people, is desirous of a socialistic order. Yet Marxian Socialism instead of basing itself on the general interests of all the people, bases itself on one class, the proletariat, which in most countries is even today a minority. It orients itself around the fiction of internationalism instead of around the reality of nations. Is it not inevitable that fascism will make use of the driving forces which Marxist Socialism has left unused? Has not the defeat of the German workers' movement been the natural function of its own narrow principle? Is it not every new orientation which remains within the limits of proletarian Socialism foredoomed to failure. Must not, as the fascists once formulated it, Marxism die so that Socialism may live?

Let us contrast this Folksocialistic line of argument with the Marxist position so that we may examine both in the light of historical experience.

Marx also saw Socialism as the necessary result of the development of society as a whole although he saw this development emerge in the

class struggle. The democratic revolutions which in the past and even in Marx's own time had begun apparently as classless people's revolutions, proved to be bourgeois revolutions in their course and final results. With inexorable clearness the class oppositions within the seemingly unified masses of people were brought out in the course of revolutionary struggles. Parties which began as variegated social mixtures later took on a clear class character. These class interests stopped at various levels in the revolutionary activities of the different groups.

Marx sought an integrated social force—the class which in the struggle for the necessary socialist development of society would be able to carry through to the ultimate achievement of its program. The Socialist solution for the conflicts of bourgeois society is the destruction of private ownership of the means of production. The only class which can make this goal its own is the proletariat, that class which is excluded from all private ownership of the means of production and which is forced to live by the sale of its labor power. As Marx foresaw, the proletariat will not fight the revolutionary battles of the future alone any more than the bourgeois revolutions of the past have been fought by the bourgeoisie alone. Every great social change sets all groups in motion. But the proletariat alone will be in the position to give purpose and backbone to the people's movement in social revolution and to secure its victory. The tasks of the Socialists are: to free the working class from bourgeois democratic and half-socialistic leadership; to raise it to the consciousness of its own role; to make the Socialist Party the self-reliant party of the working class.

The bourgeoisie, the ruling class of capitalism was the deadly enemy of Socialist upheaval. The remaining groups were passive victims of capitalist industrial development. They could in despair protest but they could indicate no way out for the future. The proletariat was created, enlarged and organized by capitalism. It grew with progress in technique and organization; by its very nature it was forced throughout its whole existence to rebel against the ruling class. The other groups, however much they suffered under capitalism were essentially too bound to the private ownership of the means of production to break into open revolution. Only the proletariat could, as a class, win a revolutionary position with respect to capitalist ownership and carry the weaker groups with them. *These conclusions made*

clear the essential unity of Socialism and the workers' movement. They established the proletariat's claim for leadership in the revolutionary struggle of the present. They constitute the political kernel of Marxism. Today they are about ninety years old. Can Socialists proclaim that historical developments have contradicted them? Yet some "Socialists" declare that not proletarian Socialism but only Folksocialism can conquer! Before we examine their individual arguments we wish to review the history of the only Socialist revolution which has conquered and maintained itself—namely the Russian Revolution.

In the Russian revolutionary movement there was a struggle between Marxists and Folksocialists. Under Russian conditions this was only too natural, for in Russia there were revolutionary groups with socialistic ideas long before there was a developed capitalism. Even in 1917, 85 per cent of the population were peasants; the proletariat was a small minority. Here, if anywhere, the Marxist doctrines, proletarian Socialism, was bound to be out of place. Here, if anywhere, an anti-Marxist Folksocialism was bound to develop.

Out of the revolutionary tradition of Narodnaja Wolja there developed two groups:—on one side the first Russian Marxist group called "The Liberation of Work," and eventually the illegal Socialistic workers' movement; on the other side the Narodnaja movement of the nineties and the Social Revolutionary Party. The Narodniki were Socialists even though their ideas of Socialism were sometimes hazy. They saw the elements of Socialism not in modern industrial development, against which they struggle, but in the survival of a cooperative system of production in the Russian villages. In capitalism they saw a product of western civilization, the development of which did not seem possible in Russia. In the argument against the Marxists they repeated the old fight of the Pan-Slavics against those of the Russian intelligentsia who were Western minded. The Marxists, on the other hand, did not understand the peculiarities of Russian development and of the national temperament which made necessary a special Russian type of Socialism. In an oppressed peasant nation, which had inherent in it tremendous revolutionary energies and which had maintained socialistic forms of production, they proclaimed, along with the liberals, the progressive tendencies of industrial development; the necessity of destroying these old forms of production; and the right of the then embryonic proletariat to leadership in the

coming revolution. Would it not seem that the Marxists, even then, "sacrificed the socialistic possibilities" of the country to an abstract, foreign doctrine infected with liberalism?" Is it not clear that one must translate the Narodniki as Folksocialists?

From their attachment to medieval economic organization to their conflict with Marxism as "liberalism"; from the thesis that each nation must develop its own peculiar socialism to the struggle against intellectual foreign influence; from the idealization of the peasant to the glorification of the intelligentsia as uniting the various interest groups of a revolutionary people; from the struggle against materialism to the cult of individualism; there is not a single Folksocialistic argument which could not have appeared in the economic writings of Woronzow and Danielson or the sociological writings of Michailowski and Lowrow.* For us the important thing is to discuss the historical consequences of this approach.

On the foundation of the Narodnikian doctrine developed the Russian Social Revolutionary Party. Thanks to an ideology, whose confusion corresponded to the mental state of the oppressed peasant mass, it won strong sympathies in the country districts. Thanks to a cult of personal heroism, it won a strong following among the intellectual youth. It spoke an effective un-doctrinaire language; in its agitation it liked to designate every popular reform which it advocated as socialistic and to obscure the differences between the democratic struggle against absolutism and the struggle for socialist goals. It also used individual terrorism as a means of propaganda so that it was known and feared far beyond its real strength, though that was considerable for an illegal party. Even when industrial development went forward and the village economy definitely lost its old forms the opposition of the social revolutionaries to the Marxists did not decrease. As opponents of the hegemony of the proletariat, relying on a peasant following under the leadership of the intelligentsia, they remained Folksocialist revolutionaries against the exploiting minority.

The social revolutionaries defended Russian soil in the World War, and they were very strongly represented in the Soviets after the revolution, even playing an important role in the Kerensky regime. Kerensky himself was a Trudowik, the follower of a related petty bourgeois-socialistic group.

*Prominent writers of the Narodniki group.

And now something happened which was highly astounding for the followers of social revolutionary ideas: the Social Revolutionary Party which had attained power failed to carry out their agrarian revolutionary program although the peasants themselves were already attempting to realize it. It surrendered its "materialistic" demands in favor of "national" interest by carrying on the war and the interest of the Russian and entente-bourgeoisie.

In the moment when the achievement of the agrarian revolution became historically possible it was possible only through a merciless fight against the bourgeoisie and therefore only under the leadership of the Proletarian Revolutionary Party. On the day after the Bolsheviks, united with the Marxist group which had split off from the social revolutionaries, seized power, the parceling of the land was proclaimed by law. *The party of the peasant revolutionary tradition, brought to power by the peasant revolution, had to be split, defeated and eliminated by the Marxists, in order that the peasant revolution could succeed.* Even the left social revolutionaries could not understand the necessities of the revolutionary state and they soon ignominiously disappeared from the stage with a few counter revolutionary attacks.

The revolution had revealed the class character of this early Folksocialist party. The classless party of all the exploited, the true party of the Russian people now appeared what it always had been—a petty bourgeois party. The limitations of the petty bourgeoisie set the limits of its revolutionary activity. At the moment when the achievement of its program threatened the stability of bourgeois society, it surrendered its program. The realization of the progressive features of its program was accomplished only through its defeat. This is the history of the Russian experience, the experience of the country which produced the strongest Folksocialist movement under the most favorable conditions, the experience of the country which has found its way to socialism. It does not speak well for the Folksocialists. But they will dispute the statement that those conditions were the most favorable. They will point out the new conditions of present-day Europe as the true conditions for developments of Folksocialism. Over against the failure in Russia they will set the defeat of the Marxists in central Europe and in Germany. We will find the lesson of the German experience if we contrast the Marxist approach with that of

Otto Strasser. We will ascertain beyond question the necessities of the new situation, if we criticized Folksocialism as a social-democratic tendency.

III. FOLKSOCIALISM AS A SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC TENDENCY

1. *The Class-Struggle and the Nation*

IN EVERY country where bourgeois democracy faces a crisis the class struggle becomes a decisive battle for the leadership of the nation. The party which wishes to conquer must establish its claim to leadership before the whole nation and must possess a definite position on all general national problems. Without a definite foreign policy, without the integration of this foreign policy with a position on national defense, without an orientation of these questions in a concrete socialistic working program, there can be no seizure and maintenance of power. To demand this from a working class party is not Folksocialistic. It is realistic, socialistic power-politics, it is the revival of Marxist traditions which were buried in long periods of reformist self-limitation. A Folksocialistic tendency, on the other hand, represents a failure to understand that even this fight for the leadership of the nation can only lead to the triumph of the Socialists when it is conducted as a ruthless class struggle.

The French People's Front will not maintain its power, nor will the British Labor Party win power, unless they prove themselves leaders in the questions of foreign policy. This is not the only determining factor of their future, but it is one of the factors. *The German anti-fascists will never be able to make use of an historic opportunity if they do not begin today to think through concretely and seriously general national problems.* And no one can succeed in this task who does not feel himself inextricably bound with the struggle within Germany, with the German movement as it has been and as it is today. He who, like so many emigrants, considers the mentality of fascism an unalterable heritage of German barbarism, who has not the faith and will for its overthrow, is no revolutionary. An embittered refusal to face the realities which dictate our tasks is no way to power; it is instead the petrified position of helplessness. All this is true, and to say it, as Sollmann does in his articles, is worthwhile.

But Sollmann designates as hindrances to the necessary socialistic power-politics, not only the political impotence of abstract pacifism, not only the perverted nationalism of many emigrants, but also the "outworn terminology" of the class-struggle, and the "too-narrow world view of Marxism." He asserts that this world view is inadequate to influence the groups whose help will be decisive for the victory of socialism in Germany. Does Sollmann really think that only the terminology is outworn? If so, then he must show a way to present the socialist cause more effectively. Is it not really that Marxism itself seems too narrow to him? Did he not really mean that the class struggle itself must be set aside, in order to win the leadership of the nation? That indeed is pure Folksocialism.

In this the Folksocialists share the opinion of the fascists, as well as the traditional reformists, that the class interests of the proletariat and the national interests stand opposed to each other. The reason is this: that they, the fascists, consciously and the Folksocialists, unconsciously—identify national interest with the interest of the *capitalistic* progress of the nation. In a capitalist class society the advantage of one is necessarily the disadvantage of another; increase in wages lowers profits and sharpens the general national crisis, which in turn drags down the middle class. Therefore the Fascists (carrying with them the reformists) demand, in a crisis, the sacrifice of the working class to the interest of the nation; therefore the Folksocialists stand blindly opposed to the revolutionary possibilities of the class struggle; therefore De Man believes that in crisis a program for a planned society must take the place of the economic class struggle. But supposing the working class, having won strength in the economic war, and using the sharpened crisis for decisive blows against capitalist ownership, should prevent Capital from turning its losses over to the middle class, and, in alliance with these middle classes, overthrow the rule of capitalism? Only then would the nation's way to socialism be open; in this way can class interest and national interest coincide. This is the Marxist interpretation of the class struggle for the leadership of the nation.

In Italy the workers' movement yielded to fascism, because it did not conduct its class war as a struggle for power, because it made the national crisis more acute, without solving it socialistically. In Germany the workers' movement yielded to Fascism because it sub-

ordinated its class war to the interests "of the whole people,"—in reality, of the bourgeoisie. In this way it weakened its own force, and so was incapable of any struggle for power, of any socialistic solution. No national manifestations of the workers' movement (and they were plentiful in both parties in the last years before its overthrow) were able to produce any effect in times of retreat in the class-struggle. In France the workers' movement has shown in the last months that proletarian class struggle and fruitful alliance with the middle classes, war for wages and war for the nation, are not antitheses, but belong together. The more decisively it carries on the struggle against Big Capital, the more securely will the alliance hold, and the stronger will be the power of the government. If, on the other hand, the government should separate allegedly national interests from their proletarian basis, it would quickly enough lose the support of the middle classes as well.

Perhaps some will object to us on the ground that we, in true Marxist fashion, are veering off from the "real" national questions, the questions of foreign policy and defense, to internal politics. Actually, we have only demonstrated for internal policy what holds good also for foreign policy:—that the class war must not be oriented around national ideas, but that the war over the destiny of the nation must be conducted as a class war. Granted, the Socialist parties in democratic countries need a national program, a concrete position with respect to the danger of war and national defense. This will have to include, above all, a decidedly anti-fascist foreign policy, the socialization of the munitions industry, and the democratization of all the forces of defense; it must be a program for the protection of democracy and of peace both at home and abroad. Dispute can only arise as to whether one should *fight* for *this* program, or *concede* to the capitalist *enemies* of democracy their *completely opposite* program,—out of fear of not seeming sufficiently nationalistic. The Folk-socialists who like to learn from the Nazi should remember that these militarists even dared to refuse the credits for air security of the civil population. This didn't stop their march to power.

A national policy, in this sense, does not mean, as Sollmann thinks, a *limiting* of the obligations to the International, but rather their maximum *fulfillment*. For an anti-fascist foreign policy, which works for the maintenance of peace, must necessarily be carried out in dif-

ferent countries cooperatively. While the Folksocialists philosophize about the reality of the nation and the helplessness of the International, they overlook the real foreign problems of the present. While they contrast national politics with class politics, the questions of foreign politics themselves take on a clear class character. Internationally, the creation of a strong anti-fascist peace front depends today on the strength of the workers' movement. The International, collectively, as a real force, will be exactly as effective as the workers' parties of the individual countries are effective in the struggle for the control of the nation.

In the struggle for sanctions this conception of an anti-fascist front was foreshadowed, and it has become more definite through the provocations of German fascism. Now the Spanish struggles have put the question with all the clearness which is necessary. Is it possible to doubt that the maximum of cooperative help to the struggling Spanish democracy corresponds to the international class interest and to the national defense interest of the French movement as well as to the interests of the Soviet Union. Here there is an alternative between engaging in battle and retreat before the fascist threats on both sides, but nowhere is there an opposition of national and international obligations.

2. Alliance Problems and Agrarian Policy

The main exponent of Folksocialism in the ranks of social democracy is Wenzel Jaksch. He coined the formula of the revival of workers' socialism as Folksocialism. His book, "The People and the Workers," is in many ways a serious, positive contribution to the clarifying of the tasks of the German revolution. To secure the victory of socialism in Germany, the working class must not content itself with proclaiming its right to rule; it must prove itself capable of solving German problems in accordance with the needs of the great laboring majority, so that it can line up this majority in a general socialist front. Insofar as the book is based on this position, insofar as it contains abundant concrete suggestions on the problem, we welcome and agree with it.

The peculiarity of the book lies, however, in this: that this position, supposedly fixed, transforms itself under the pen of the author, so to

speaking, into another, namely the Folksocialistic position. Here it is expounded, along true Marxist lines, that the working class has a rightful claim to leadership, that only it can carry through the struggle for socialism; there it is said that today, when the decline of capitalism has broken up classes, pro-socialist feeling is created, no longer out of the situation of the proletarian class, but out of the general situation of a people which has been made proletarian. On one page the problem of the middle groups is the problem of alliance in the fight for freedom in Germany; on another page it is the problem of a new interpretation of the socialist idea itself. In one place the subject is treated from the standpoint of the workers' movement in a modern and realistic way; in another place the standpoint of this same workers' movement is dealt with as that of a vanished era. Bewildered by a dark, symbolic language, which testifies to the author's indefinite, personal thought-processes, the reader meets, in almost every question, this sort of confusing jump from politics to metaphysics.

Beyond contention, the most important alliance problem of the German workers' movement is the connection with the peasantry. Jaksch is certainly wrong in denying that the proletariat alone forms the majority of the German people; it is inadmissible in this connection to count white collar employees and farm workers as non-proletarian groups. But the problem of alliances has a significance quite independent of purely numerical majorities. It is a question, not of a parliamentary vote, but of the dynamics of a revolutionary movement, which must, in the crucial moment, group the overwhelming majority of the people on its side, and the influence of single groups in such a movement is determined by quite other factors than sheer number. Because the large landholder must from the first be counted as an enemy, the peasant is of decisive importance for the feeding of the people in a revolutionary crisis; *therefore* the peasantry has a decisive position in revolutionary alliance.

The question of the relationship of the proletariat to the peasantry is an old one. We agree today—with Jaksch, when he underlines the necessity of a program of redistribution of land at the expense of the large landholders, of the abolition of hereditary peasant rights and of other important measures for the peasants. But we consider that he is wrong when he traces the lack of an alliance with the peas-

antry in the Weimar Republic back to the victory of Kautsky over David in the agrarian debate of the Revision period, and to an alleged friendliness of the Marxists to big business. Kautsky's conceptions long ago ceased to influence agrarian policy under social democracy. So far as there was special consideration for big land owners in the Weimar Republic, it certainly had nothing to do with Marxism. The main reason why no strong alliance came about lay in the lack of a sufficient fighting strength in the workers' movement itself, strength without which the most beautiful promises must necessarily prove unavailing.

The working class can neither expect the peaceful dying out of the peasantry, nor can it count on its peaceful preservation; it is rather forced, in one country after another, to wage its great struggle for power in the face of a peasant mass festering, despairing, desiring political help. Kautsky's prognosis of the festering of the peasantry has so far substantiated itself; he was mistaken about the political forms of the process and the strategic results for the workers' movement. David's economic analysis has not been substantiated. Jaksch, in that he confuses this fact: that he places Kautsky's error in his (Kautsky's) economic theory, as if the political survival of the peasantry should be a sign of the vital strength of the peasant small-scale production in Europe, commits one of those leaps which transforms tactical adaptation into fundamental revision of principle.

To understand the significance of this revision, one must treat it in connection with Jaksch's general economic doctrine, which is a doctrine of population and territory. The aggressive fascist states of the present are, according to him, *overpopulated* states. Here again he begins with a quite correct statement of the question, in that he conceives the overpopulation as socially, and not just statistically and geographically conditioned. How many persons can support themselves in a given space is a question of social organization. The carrying through of this thought leads him, however, to such astounding conclusions as the concept that agriculture organized on a small scale is politically healthier from the point of view of population because it gives employment to more people,—both directly and, also, through its greater need of tools, indirectly in industry. So it comes about that the more primitive it is in technical organization, the more people a country can support and employ!

The apparent paradox rests on a quite accurate observation of facts. A highly organized economy which works extensively for exportation, can employ fewer people if its markets are suddenly closed to it than a correspondingly primitive one established on a basis of self-sufficiency. The check of the development of specialization of labor in production, and the capitalist transformation of every reduction of output into a reduction of workers are the two premises on which Jaksch's paradox hold good. But Jaksch goes from this conception straight to the problems of the organization of the socialist economy. And even the limitation of specialization of labor he conceives as in no way permanent; he quite rightly opposes to the fascist ideas of self-sufficiency and a return to agrarianism, the necessity to use to the utmost the possibilities of specialized industrial export production for the profit of the whole German economy.

What then can be the meaning of the population argument for small-scale agricultural production? Why is a concept which can be correct under the circumstances of a transitional labor-condition in a crisis, elevated to a lasting principle of socialist economy? The vices of the capitalistic crisis are made socialist virtues!

We begin to see an explanation when Jaksch announces the postulate that the European peasantry must never be sacrificed to overseas agriculture, operating along rational lines with up-to-date machinery, with which it can compete as little as the English textile worker can compete with the Indian or Japanese. But this comparison is obviously invalid. The relative inability of the English textile worker to compete with the Indian or Japanese is not caused by technological factors, but by his higher standard of living. In agriculture on the other hand it is the North and South American method of production, which is technically superior and which makes possible the higher living standards of the producers; while a growing part of the European peasantry can carry on production only under conditions of extreme wretchedness. Certainly no Socialist would accept the traditional position of European liberal parties by demanding the radical removal of all protective measures for the European peasantry, and free competition for overseas products; an indescribable mass misery and mass despair, a catastrophic social collapse would be the result. But it is another question whether European agriculture, where it is

economically unproductive has to be maintained—even in the historical perspective—and with it the “strong and healthy” peasantry—or whether in the long run an organized transfer of the masses now engaged in agriculture to other vocations will not be necessary.

From the point of view of an immediate revolutionary program this is of course no actual question. But it is Jaksch and not we who has dragged questions of general perspective into the discussion. Here, in the realm of purely economic debate, is demonstrated a lack of understanding of the possibilities of maintaining and employing a growing population on an ever higher level, when the victory of Socialism makes possible a rational social application of improving technique. This lack of understanding results in the fact that a concern for the needs of the peasantry, made necessary by the circumstances of a transitional situation, becomes with the Folksocialists, a principle hostile to economic and technical progress. It is a peasant socialism, a socialism proclaiming the everlasting preservation of peasantry as an independent value, which is put in opposition to the “liberal” workers’ socialism.

3. *The European Orientation*

The same transformation of immediate political aims into independent principles confronts us in Jaksch’s position on the whole question of European unity. Rightly the position of Germany in Europe plays a large part in his book. The solution of the problems of building socialism cannot be achieved for an isolated Germany alone. On the other hand Germany occupies a key position for European development. From Germany can go out the decisive impulse toward overcoming the chaos of nationalistic contradictions and toward economic and cultural cooperation in a free federation of European states. But the creation of this federation has a premise—that premise is the annihilation of those class forces which are maintaining present-day chaos, and the victory of Socialism outside the German borders.

But Jaksch’s European orientation means something more even than this recognition. At one time he makes a distinction between the positive type of national consciousness, the consciousness of the achievements of a nation and of its tasks in the society of nations, and the negative type, which manifests itself in the nationalistic warding-

off of the surrounding world. Yet one can say that Jaksch himself develops above a positive European consciousness a negative one, an emphatic demarcation of the European continent from all non-European peoples, the British Empire, and even the Soviet Union. This *European nationalism* expresses itself economically in those observations on European peasants and textile workers; culturally in the much-stressed defensiveness against an Americanism about which only the vaguest conceptions emerge, and in the everlasting reminder that Soviet-Russian development is outside the European tradition. Politically this signifies the tendency to effect European unity as quickly as possible, independent of the class character of the partners, and to set every European alliance above the possibility of a close connection with the Soviet Union.

The Socialist who strives for the European federation will, if victorious in a single country, see himself forced to seek protection against other European states. He will find his main support in the Soviet Union in the hour of need. The European nationalist, who renounces this connection, will inevitably seek alliance with nearby states, however reactionary they may be, will sacrifice to these alliances whatever results his own socialist activity may have won. Insofar as he maintains the bourgeois character of this state-system, he will retain, against his will, its inner contradictions. The socialist revolutionary, in determining his European policy will use the idea of a united Europe as a weapon to strengthen the front of the ruthless opponents of Hitler. The European nationalist who, like Jaksch in this very chapter, considers the main misfortune of a European war to be the resulting advantage to non-European forces, will try to impede the inevitable fronts through compromises, and so to confuse and weaken the anti-fascist front.

4. *New Fronts—with Whom?*

Among the groups with whom socialist workers must ally themselves Jaksch reckons the young intellectuals. The significance of intellectuals, at least of certain qualified groups, for the political decisions of the present is indubitable. But one can scarcely count some of these groups, as for instance the technically and economically trained intellectuals, as *independent* allies of the workers. From the

standpoint of their objective situation they form a new and very important over-segment of the working class itself, and the socialist task with respect to this group consists exactly in this: to bring to its attention this natural alliance in the face of all tendencies toward a caste-conscious separation. Above all, the fact that these groups perpetually rebel against the diminishing uses of their abilities under capitalism presents the opportunity to win them over to socialist goals.

But when Jaksch speaks of allies whom the workers ought not to repel because they come to Socialism from other motives; when he summons Moeller van der Bruck in this connection and appropriates his formula of "chivalrous youth," it becomes apparent that he does not mean a group at all, but the followers of a political trend. He does not mean the intellectuals or a definite section of the intellectuals, he means the *National Youth Movement*, the critical young generation of National Socialism. There can be no doubt of the idealism and self-sacrifice of these young people, nor of the value which they can have for every revolutionary movement, even if the Folksocialists tend to over-estimate their influence in the general Nazi movement. But what Jaksch recommended was not the winning over of these valuable people who indulge in a vague socialistic emotion to a clear socialist purposefulness, but rather a "new spiritual front," which means an *ideological compromise with their unclearness*.

When one reads Jaksch and particularly Franzel one sometimes believes that these young idealists made the Nazi movement and were the determining factor in its strength. This is not true. The Nazi movement did not get its power from the idealism of the few, but (if we do not take into account the big capitalist beneficiaries) from the materialistic despair of the millions who saw the last hope for the security of their present existence in a change of the state form. Even the representative leadership consisted overwhelmingly of desperados, up-rooted adventurers of all sorts, and only in small part of those idealists. These gathered much more on the edge of the Nazi mass movement, in the national Bolshevik factions, in cliques of the youth movement, around magazines, possibly in the student and youth organizations of the Nazi party. They were caught up by a movement whose phraseology sounded like their own ideas; they could be won by this movement because these very ideas were unclear and hazy.

It is an important task of the socialist workers' movement to approach these groups, to find the new language for the new generation which no longer knows the old ties. But the purpose of this approach, its content, what will be said with the new language, must be the routing of these people's illusions, not an accommodation to them. These people, who feel themselves betrayed, do not understand why they have been betrayed. We must help them to understand it.

In Germany the cause of the workers' movement was defeated because it was not represented in purposes and forms appropriate to the time. In Germany socialist idealists have been disillusioned because they connected themselves not with the cause of the workers' movement but with the cause of the enemies of socialism. One of the tasks of the revived workers' movement will be to teach these disillusioned Socialists to fight on the right side in the future. *But the workers' movement will not be able to take over its new ways from those who have themselves fought on the side of the enemy and, to date, do not grasp the fact that it was the wrong side.*

5. The Consequences

We have shown point for point how the Folksocialists move within the sphere of social democracy in all questions in a twilight of tactical adaptation and fundamental revision. We wish once again to summarize why the analysis of their real position is more than an "orthodox" verbal hair-splitting. It is a question simply of the existence of the socialist workers' movement.

If general national questions must be drawn into the class struggle, if the problems of alliance have won a new meaning, if Socialism needs a European strategy, if a new language must be found for new groups who have been won over to Socialism, then the socialist workers' parties must bring themselves up to date. If the solution of national problems through the socialist movement demands the setting-back of the class struggle, if the socialist idea must spring directly from the situation of the middle groups in the same way as from that of the proletariat, if the solution of European problems can be achieved independently of the class character of the European state, if the language of disillusioned Nazis gives the real content of the socialist idea of today more accurately than the "outworn terminology of the class

struggle"—then one must *liquidate* the workers' parties for in such a case workers' parties are merely survivals of the liberal epoch, survivals which in the liberal states may still have functions in representing special interests but which for the creation of socialist strength, are only a hindrance. In Germany, after the end of the Weimar Republic, they would have lost all meaning. Instead of rebuilding our organizations under infinite dangers and through infinite sacrifices, we would be asked to bring our connections and our ideas into the crucible of Folksocialism.

It is the purpose of this analysis to bring home this conclusion to every reader, that the Folksocialist attack on Marxism directs itself not against an outworn terminology but actually against the historic task of the workers' movement itself. Therefore we have discussed the question in this fundamental fashion in the second section. That is why we have now indicated on each individual question, how Folksocialism jumps from a new orientation of the workers' movement to an orientation out of the workers' movement.


It is the weight of the German defeat and the weakness of the workers' movement in central Europe which have brought about this tendency to veer away from the main line. They are responsible for the fact that the answer to the new questions is sought in this direction: that we must make use for our cause of the sources of strength of fascism. They give rise to the idea that since Hitler conquered with the conception of a socialism without class struggle, Socialism itself could conquer more easily with this conception. *They allow the disillusioned stragglers of the Hitler ideology to appear as the forerunners of the new socialist idea.*

The organized expression of the disillusionment of old Nazis is the "revolutionary National Socialism" of Otto Strasser. The Folksocialists in the Social Democratic movement, who wish to escape from the "narrowness" of Marxism, advocate an alliance with Otto Strasser, carrying with it an ideological concession to him. Strasser's principle of grouping includes, in fact, every "renovated" socialism which no longer derives from class interest, but which appeals directly from the situation of a people who have been made proletarian to the soul of that people. It fulfills all the conditions which the Folksocialists demand of the workers' movement. Its existence creates a focal point

for their development. From his failure they can learn what the real teaching of the German defeat is: *the defeat has not contradicted* the Marxian statement that Socialism can only conquer under the leadership of the working class; on the contrary it has confirmed it.

IV. FOLKSOCIALISM IN ITS PURE FORM

1. *Otto Strasser and the Hitler System*

 OTTO STRASSER has recently republished his "Program of German Socialism" in a new edition. He boasts that he has altered no essential point since the first edition in 1931. That is quite true.

The touchstone for the character of the Strasser group is its position with regard to the Hitler System. This he designates today, as he did formerly, the "Gironde of the German revolution." Strasser also sees in the Hitler System the stabilizing of a first, imperfect stage of the same revolution which he is striving for. Stabilization at this imperfect stage is naturally fought by Strasser as reactionary. But his fight against the Hitler System is carried on within the framework of a conception resulting from its own ideals. Here lies his psychological strength as an agitator, as opposed to the exponents of the Nazi System. But here lies also the principal weakness of his position. He cannot understand how a movement with these ideals could lead to this result.

For us the conception that the Hitler System is a first step toward socialism is absurd. Even Jaksch leaves no room for doubt on this point: Hitler represents the victory of the most reactionary feudal-capitalist powers over democratic forces. How does this long-lived illusion about the revolutionary character of the Hitler System come about in Strasser, his "ally"?

Strasser judged the Hitler movement not according to its social character but according to its ideas. These ideas were in many important points his own: the elimination of the class struggle not through a genuine setting aside of classes, but through a relating ideal,—the freeing of the socialist goal from the working class and its international—and the treatment of the war as the beginning of

the German national-socialist revolution. Strasser was and is of the opinion that the idea of national solidarity, of the unity of all groups of the people in sacrifice, of comradeship at the Front, is in itself socialistic. He admits that this thought needs to be given the concreteness of the socialist goal, but he thinks that only Hitler's inadequacy is to blame for the fact that it did not achieve this concreteness. In Hitler's ideology the "socialist" ideals of a conservative revolution are still confused with the liberal and imperialist thought of the race theory and the defense of private ownership. When Strasser realized that this was not to be overcome in Hitler, he turned from him, disillusioned.

Strasser was surprised by the victory of the "liberal"—in other words, capitalist—tendencies of the Hitler party. To this day he has not renounced the original cause of his disillusion: to this day he has not realized that on its social basis the Hitler party cannot be a socialist party. He has not learned the lesson of his disillusion.

Strasser's ideas, on the strength of which he joined Hitler and worked long and actively in the building of the NSDAP, are in many ways similar to the old ideas of the Narodniki. Certainly the historical situation was completely different: Germany was no backward agricultural country, but a highly capitalistic industrial country, with developed capitalist class contradictions. Here was no absolutism, opposed alike by Marxists and Narodniki, but a bourgeois democracy, in which strong workers' organizations possessed significant rights. In this situation an emphatically non-proletarian socialism could only be, ideologically, an anti-proletarian movement, aiming at the annihilation of the rights of the workers. When the crisis of bourgeois democracy made the concentration of power at one pole, in the hands of one of the contending social forces inevitable, then the National Socialist movement could only be the opposite pole of the socialist movement, that is, the vehicle of fascism.

The inner principles of the situation and of the social forces, not the narrowness of Hitler, the treachery of Goebbels, or the ambition of Goering, are to blame for the line of development of the NSDAP. That Strasser's brother Gregor was defeated in the decisive party crisis was the result not of the influence of intriguers, but essentially because he sought an alliance with trade-union organizations and

relatively progressive industrial groups,—an alliance which went against the social nature of the Nazi party, while his opponents turned to a natural ally for this party—to a “Folk’s Unity”* of bankruptcy. The historical situation left no more room for Narodniki parties; the Narodniki ideology could only by the weapon of a fascist party. The Hitler party did not make fascism a reality because it betrayed its ideals, but because it was, from the very beginning, a fascist party.

The workers’ movement, which was overthrown by this fascist party, must draw from its defeat lessons of strategy, tactics, and organization. Strasser experienced something worse than defeat: the force which he thought was the vehicle of his ideas conquered—and brought into effect the very opposite of his ideas. Thus it is he, not we, who must revise fundamental concepts. We have not succeeded in seizing power; his allies, having achieved power, have turned against his goals. Strasser can only misunderstand this difference if he wishes to keep the Hitler legend that in the German Republic the “Marxists” were actually in control because in the Republic the organized workers were not without rights, as they are today—after the victory of the “Gironde of the German Revolution.”

What revolutionary achievement can Strasser find to justify this formula? He himself emphasizes the fact that Hitler did not bring socialism, but stabilized capitalism. But when workers’ parties uphold democratic demands, then he speaks of a backward step, regression. The progress, the partially revolutionary result of Hitler lies for Strasser in the setting aside of parliamentary democracy.

We do not wish the recurrence of the Weimer Republic. If Strasser means that this system is historically outdistanced, he certainly shows more sense of reality than some contemporary poet-framers of constitutions. But because the Hitler regime emerged out of the untenable Weimar democracy, because it is historically later, it is not on that score better for Socialists. Hitler’s victory has detracted tremendously from the really socialist forces,—in men, in freedom of movement, in the power of opposition. Strasser himself will not be able to maintain that he can develop his group better today, under the terror of the Gestapo and penetrated by its spies than he could before the

*Volksgemeinschaft

advent of the totalitarian state. But the possibility for the development of socialist forces is the only criterion of whether a regime brings us nearer the victory of the socialist revolution. The underground fighters in Germany know that Hitler's regime is not the system of the incomplete German revolution, but of the complete counter-revolution.

The fact that Strasser has not grasped this, and cannot grasp it from his idealistic Folksocialist position, must necessarily confuse all his political perspectives. Parts of the workers' movement were at first slow to realize the stability of the fascist regime and prophesied its collapse at every difficulty. Strasser in particular was guilty of this self-deception. Whoever fails to recognize the regime as complete in itself, whoever mistakes it for a stage in a forward-moving revolution borne on by the same forces which created it, fails to realize its stability. Out of this there also emerges certain peculiar conceptions about the way to the overthrow of the regime, which are different from those held by all other enemies of Hitler.

*2. The Return to a Guild Society**

Otto Strasser's Program contains detailed statements of the governmental and economic structure which seems to him socialistic. He is, however, completely silent about the way to this goal. We, Marxists, on the other hand, must at once busy ourselves with this question, for the Folksocialists in the social democratic movement, advocate an alliance on the road to power—and only the road and the goal together form a political program!

In Strasser's newspaper the approaches to the way are strikingly hazy. Naturally his group spreads illegal propaganda, above all in Nazi organizations themselves. He also maintains that the war against the Hitler system must be fought with all means, so long as they do not contradict the essence of his goal. (An important limitation, to which we will return later.) But he says nothing to indicate that he sees clearly his road to power. Luckily something can be gathered on this point from his political concepts.

The political form of Strasser's socialism must be a heirarchy. It

*Guild Society translated from "Ständestaat."

comprises a developed combination of local preliminary elections by occupational groups, indirect representation of such local-occupational groups in the higher bodies, and nomination from the top down, which in many points is reminiscent of the structure of the Catholic Church. The details are irrelevant, but two characteristics must be noted: the strict prohibition of other political parties basically allied with the idea that "the degrading delusion of popular self-government" must disappear; and, what is the main point, the fact that Strasser's system cannot be built from below but only from above. Of the three authorities in whose hands the government shall be vested—President, Great Council, and Congress, only the third results from a vote, an indirect vote at that. The President is to be chosen, indeed, from the Great Council, but that in turn is chiefly nominated by the President. Thus the system can only begin to function on the assumption that the President is there first, appoints the ministers and district presidents for the Great Council, and then—in a one party state—declares the elections.

When Strasser's book first appeared* it clearly advocated that the first step toward this state had to be capture of the dictatorial state power through a group led by Strasser. Today under fascism the reviving of this program, the reviving of the anti-democratic polemic has a clear and significant meaning. If things go according to Strasser, the Hitler System will be overthrown, not by an unchaining of the oppressed masses, not by their reawakening to political power—but by a revolution from above, a palace revolution within the Nazi set-up, on the basis of which Strasser will bestow the true socialism on an amazed and delighted people.

Of course the Hitler regime will never be overthrown by a pure palace revolution; so far Strasser's illusions are no real danger. But if the masses do come into action, opposing factions will doubtless arise, with the attempt to use the masses as bridges to their private ends, only to throw them back into a permanent state of political powerlessness after the work has been completed. The duty of the Socialists, on the other hand, will be to make full use of the contradictions of the Nazi set-up for the maximum expansion of the movement and the destruction of the set-up. If they wish this, then they must

*1931.

not indulge in illusions about any fraction of the fascist movement and they must oppose any ideology that directs the hopes of the masses toward any such fraction.

3. *Planned Economy with the Hereditary Tenure*

Now how does the German socialism which Otto Strasser wishes to confer on us look as an economic order? At first glance one finds some clear formulas, corresponding with the language of the Marxists. Strasser demands a planned economy, secured by the abolition of private ownership of land, natural resources, and means of production. In the concrete definition of the content of these formulas there emerge considerable differences.

Private ownership of the means of production would be abolished while individual possession of the means of production is maintained. The individual "owner" would then as before produce on his own account under individual responsibility, but under the control of the state as proprietor. The "owner" would also inherit the rights of possession,—unless special reasons in the individual case caused the state to withdraw the "loan." What Strasser has in mind here and in the argument where he speaks of the German's need of individual responsibility is naturally the small business. Admitted, this is in fact the only solution a socialist state can find for individual agricultural enterprise; for this very reason the existence of many small enterprises creates always a relative limitation of the efficacy of planned economy. Undoubtedly in Germany we shall have to reckon with a large number of agricultural enterprises for a considerable period. Undoubtedly it will be necessary to destroy in large measure the big land holdings, and thus to increase this number of individual holdings. Up to this point there is no important difference.

The real question is how state proprietorship and planned economy are to be reconciled with the principle of hereditary loan in the field of *large industrial enterprise*. For the ability to conduct industry is crucial for German socialism. Here Strasser conceives a three-part division of the management and profits of business between the "owner" (holder of the "loan"), the employes, and the state. This system he also recommends for the big banks,—insofar as their socialization does not prove itself necessary—a considerable uncertainty. The

"loans" of productive units to industry would also be hereditary; a class of captains of production, an officers' corps would be educated. Strasser does not notice how this contradicts the fundamental principle, announced in the chapter on education, of an equal start.

It is difficult to consider the hereditary loan to industry otherwise than as the cheerful fancy of a dilettante. Under this system the special business interests, represented by employer and employe can thwart any government plan at any time. The application of the idea of the German's joy of possession to the manager of a big business, who is even now generally an employe, and does not for that reason work any the worse, is a joke. To assume that his abilities are as naturally inherited as in the case of the peasant is at best naive. But, above all, this whole structure shows that Strasser attaches no serious meaning to the word planned economy. He defines it once as a combination of control, monopoly of foreign trade, and internal currency. To this extent fascism is also planned economy.

Strasser has not understood capitalism. He sees its crisis only in the collapse of the free world-economy. He knows nothing of the principles of cyclical crises which spring from the control and direction of the production by the profit motive. Therefore he does not know either that the socialist planned economy has above all to make production independent of the profit motive, and to plan and direct its expansion. Therefore he does not understand the function of the centralization of credit, and is enthusiastic about a new heyday of private banks. He does not understand the meaning of central planning commissions, whose decisions must first make firm the framework within which the initiative of individual directors of business enterprise can move. In his anxiety to save private initiative and to avoid bureaucracy he recommends a system which lacks central planning, but which in its place creates a maximum of disorganizing interference from government organs, combining the disadvantages of the profit motive and of bureaucracy. So he proves anew the inability of petit bourgeois socialism to achieve a clear conception of its economic goal.

4. The "People's" Europe

Strasser has achieved the clearest and most positive progress as opposed to the Hitler doctrine on the question of nationalism. He

conceives the nation as an historic and cultural, not as a biological unity. He stresses the point that the value of the individual life of the nation does not vindicate, but excludes, imperialist desires. On this foundation he pleads for the federation of European states on the Swiss model. But he is illogical enough to develop, a few pages after his denial of all imperialist aims, great plans for the colonial policy of the United Europe.

But the crucial contradiction of Strasser's European structure lies in the lack of clarity about the internal political and class assumptions in which it is to be erected. Switzerland is no creation of the twentieth century. Among highly capitalistic states, in the clutch of imperialist oppositions, no free federation but only the creation of a block through the victory of the strongest is possible. The federation today presupposes the victory of socialism in the case of all partners to it, as the Russian example indicates. The Socialists should strive and propagandize for the federation, not in detachment from their other goals, but as a part of a general program of European socialism.

Strasser is prevented from recognizing this by the thesis, that every people must find its own social order, even if that social order is fundamentally different from the contemporaneous order of neighboring peoples. As an example he indicates that the stability of Italian fascism bespeaks its suitability to the Italian people. But it is obviously impossible to make a free federation of a socialist Germany with a fascist Italy and its vassals. The nationalistic narrowing of socialist goals becomes an obstacle to the realization of European socialist ends. The way to a united Europe is the way to a socialist Europe. It is possible only through the building of united front of socialist and progressive forces, not through a policy of blind European toleration.

And it is just this building of a common front which Strasser tries to avoid. As in domestic policy he starts by denying the class war and so is drawn to the side of those who acknowledge themselves death-enemies of Socialism, so in European policy he represents the standpoint that the formation of an international front on a common program is a mistake. Although he has little hope to be heard by the fascist international front, he actually creates an obstacle to a clear

foreign political orientation of anti-fascists. Thus the principle is confirmed that one who wants to avoid the decision becomes an aid to reaction.

WHAT IS FOLKSOCIALISM?

THE national youth, which Jaksch wishes to enroll in his front, the young national intelligence on which Strasser relies, does not exist in a vacuum. Its thoughts do not spring directly from the folk-soul, still less from any definite productive function in society; they are rather the ideological adjustment to the times, with the help of the varying traditional ideas which these people bring with them. Whether the father was a craftsman, peasant, small business man, or official, his intellectual son is already proletarianized. The contradiction between their actual experience and the values which their home backgrounds shaped, made them National Socialists; today the strong hold of the same old values leads them to oppose the new regime.

The mass basis of the National Socialist German Workers' Party extended far beyond the circle of the petit bourgeoisie. Its policies were not determined by the *specific* needs of petit bourgeois interests, although it formed its central group from the crisis of ruined petit bourgeois people. Its policies were those of all who were incapable of supporting and maintaining themselves in the capitalist war of competition and in the class war with their own economic function; and so were forced to summon the help of a strong state to secure their own existence. This state has been achieved. It has set aside the democratic forms of the class struggle. It has replaced a vacillating compromise with an active economic policy; it tramples on all classes today, politically as an oppressor, economically as a tyrant, and administratively with an abundance of bureaucratic tricks. In all classes it has given rise to a sullen discontent, a longing to free themselves from their bonds and to be able again to press for their own interests freely. The ideological form of this content is liberal among the bourgeoisie, socialistic in the working-class; among the petit bourgeoisie—just the group which has had to suffer particularly under the oppression of the bureaucratic machine—it sometimes takes a religious character, and sometimes is a variation of national socialism itself. Disillusioned old fighters are their spokesmen.

The small business man had believed that the power of a strong state could release him from the yoke of competition with large capital, the tyranny of technical progress, of fluctuation in prices and of indebtedness. He sees today that the large enterprises make profits as a result of control of allied industries; that the incipient attempts to check technological advance have vanished under the pressure of international competition and the needs of rearmament. He sees too that protection is only extended to those whose resources are exhausted; that directly on him (the small business man) falls the burden of price fluctuation through market regulations; that to the natural burdens imposed by capitalist development is added the extra burden of growing bureaucracy, which bears more heavily on him than on his rich competitors. Through all the present manifestations of the Strasser group there runs as a Leitmotiv the strong emphasis on the struggle against bureaucracy, and for the freedom of small producers to manage their own affairs.

The whole development of technique and organization of production tends today to a bureaucratic organization of society; this trend conquers every form of state. Only he who is prepared to retard technological development can oppose this tendency. Strasser, the ideological exponent of the petit bourgeoisie, has at least, such courage.

The automatic way in which the tendency to technological progress manifests itself under capitalism appears in any single country as an oppression from without. Therefore, as a protection against technical progress, the small business man demands autarchy. Autarchy in the national framework has proved itself impossible; the dynamics of technical development are victorious. So the educated small business man extends his demand for autarchy to Europe. His federation does not need to be socialistic; it has as its *sole* real objective the protection of time honored forms of production of the peasant and the small man of the continent in mutual interaction against the advances of technique in other countries and their evil effects.

The Europe of the Folksocialists is the reservation of the small business man. Strasser's socialism is the guild-paradise of the petit bourgeoisie. The *Staendestaat* is the petit bourgeois idyll of the reconciliation of stable interests far removed from the raw forms of the class struggle, from which the reconciliation of real interests will result. *Strasser's political conception is that the "little men"—those*

who made the Nazi revolution possible—will lead to victory the movement “over and beyond Hitler.” But the cultural ideal for the Germans, for which he strives, is to make *all* German petit bourgeois.

Society today, as it grows beyond the stage of liberalism, is industrially and bureaucratically organized. But the “conservative revolutionist,” Strasser, stands opposed to just those tendencies of the present out of which the new social conditions are evolving. He can only condemn them, he cannot master them. His ideal is reactionary, not because it is anti-liberal, but because it has nothing to do with the very forces by which liberalism is overthrown,—the forces of social organization springing from large scale production. For this reason his ideal is also Utopian.

But without the ideal, without the basis of evaluation, political strategy also is doomed. The petit bourgeoisie played its part in National Socialism not as a special group, but as part of a general movement which created the totalitarian state which is not at all petit bourgeois. Thrown back on its own class interests, the petit bourgeoisie can not be the agent of a progressive development. In a crisis of fascism it will be tossed back and forth between the forces of the government and the great classes, and, without understanding, will be enthusiastic about the “unity of the people,” while the fate of the nation is actually decided in struggle. From its standpoint it is impossible to indicate a clear way in the crises that are coming. The aggressive elements of German youth, who are ready to join us, who grew up in the tradition of this petit bourgeois position, and who were once led by this tradition to the side of the counter-revolution, will have to realize that the way to the side of the socialist revolution involves a break with this tradition.

Folksocialism is a belated form of petit bourgeois socialism, preserved in spite of the flowing of the main stream into the fascist movement. Folksocialism in the social democratic parties is a movement of ideological compromise with victorious fascism, disguised as an adaptation to the needs of the present. Its trend toward Strasser does not spring from Strasser’s rallying power but from the real strength of Hitler. The Folksocialists, insofar as they borrow ideas from Strasser, are seeking to accomplish the revival of socialism through those sources out of which fascism developed its powers. But socialism can renew itself only by turning back to the sources of its own strength.

V. FOLKSOCIALISM'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

1. *New Decisions—New Values*

EMIL FRANZEL's "Revolution of the West" can be looked on as the typical philosophy of history of all shades of Folksocialism. Franzel himself is a member of the German Social-Democratic party of Czechoslovakia. But Strasser has already acknowledged that Franzel has succeeded better in laying the foundation of their common conceptions than any of Strasser's colleagues. This is no wonder, since Franzel has the most comprehensive historical education of all the representatives of this trend.

Franzel's interpretation of history has a political character, not after the fashion of the Marxists, as an attempt to investigate the impelling powers of historical development, in order to contribute to orientation in the present historical situation. Rather history should be seen as a war of principles, themselves transcending history, and, from this vantage point, a new foundation for evaluations, a new base for the socialist idea are won.

The need for criteria of values, for a consciousness of the basis of their own position, with which Franzel concerns himself, is unusually strong in the present socialist generation. Youth today suffers from the same catastrophic results of the fatal distortion of Marxism in the realm of abstract values as in the field of politics.

Because Marx showed that political development was conditioned by economic development, "Marxists" believed that this development would relieve them of the responsibilities of political struggle. Today we have learned by experience that our task is to force open the way for the possibilities of economic development against powerful odds, and that a rejection of this task means defeat.

Because Marx showed that the forms of life, the values, the ideals of men were conditioned by the social structure, "Marxists" believe that they could neglect the conscious creation of socialist values, and of the foundations of new forms of life. Bourgeois, liberal values, therefore, held undisturbed sway over those in the workers' movement. In the crucial struggles of the present, when the world of liberal ideas survives only as a phantom, under the oppression of fascism which incessantly hammers its barbaric ideals into the brains and souls of its defenseless subjects, the consciousness of the values which underlie his

own socialist position becomes for every socialist an elementary necessity for self-preservation.

In the raising of this question, rather than in its historical material, lies the contribution of Franzel's book, and also its chance of being effective. The standpoint from which he approaches it is not ours, is indeed not a socialist standpoint. It is the standpoint of the foes of the workers' movement, treated with their speculative method. Its values are those of a romantic, aesthetic resignation, hostile to civilization, which Franzel falsely propagates under the banner of socialism.

2. The Methods of the Idealistic Interpretation of History

We shall deal next with the methods employed by Franzel in evolving his conception of socialism. The idealistic historian sees in the epochs of history the expression of the dominance of spiritual principles which have their own existence independent of history. For Franzel the socialist idea is such a principle. He finds it realized in the height of the Middle Ages, in the hierarchy of labor, in the communal spirit, in the cultural flowering. In order to achieve this picture, which he sharply opposes to the liberal "myth" of the "dark Middle Ages," he separates the historical reality of the mediaeval period into a "good" and a "bad" side. What pertains to the bad side, the oppression, the class struggles and contradictions, is explained as the symptoms of decadence in the late Middle Ages due to the appearance of money economy. With the entrance of money economy, with the establishment of cities, begins, according to Franzel, the dissolution of the mediaeval order, which has led us through centuries of senseless "progress" to the present senselessness and despair. Only a conservative revolution, which brings back to victory the socialistic spirit of the Middle Ages, can save us from this.

We have not space to show in detail to what distortions of actual historical development this method of Franzel's leads. From the time of Charles the Great on, the time which marks the lowest ebb of western trade and the beginning of that mediaeval order which Franzel glorifies, the whole history of the Middle Ages is the history of a straight-forward growth of trade and money economy, and of a parallel growth of well-being and culture. But Franzel allows first an epoch of cultural flowering on the basis of natural economy, and then

an epoch of money economy and consequent decline. The rise of agricultural productivity and of peasant welfare in the height of the Middle Ages demonstrates to Franzel the tendency of the mediaeval social order to equality; but this very development was the basis for the establishment of cities, in which Franzel sees the beginning of all evil. According to Franzel there prevailed between masters and bondsmen, as among the burghers of the towns, in the height of the Middle Ages, a spirit of communal solidarity which he calls socialistic. He is silent about the struggles in which serfdom rose up in revolt, and about the feudal lords against whom the solidarity of the burgers was directed. Thus in a hierarchial society, he sees a peaceful diversion of labor; in a cultural flowering, which was the transition point in the development of opposing forces, he sees a self-sufficient stability; in the dissolution of the mediaeval order through the progressive effect of these forces he sees the emergence of the diabolical modern spirit—"liberalism."

These "interpretations" indicate that Franzel did not find his ideal in the Middle Ages, but read it into them. Against the concept of the petit bourgeois socialist Proudhon, that one could separate and preserve the "good" side of a declining social order—as Franzel wishes to preserve the aspect of possession implied by private ownership—Marx had proved with the example of the Middle Ages that the development to a new form of society always came about through the victory of the "bad" side, the side of contradictions. Franzel, the historian, recognized this, and concluded that all development from that time is bad. The socialistic principle of the Middle Ages, the principle of a hierarchical interrelated order was upset by the development of money economy, of the market, and of commodity production. In fact, modern technique and civilization first became possible on the basis of this development. From his negative evaluation of general technological industrial development, Franzel reaches the conclusion that socialism must be freed from all "liberal belief in progress," and at the same time even from its connection with the industrial proletariat.

3. The Results of the Idealistic Interpretation of History

The socialistic ideal which Franzel sees embodied in the Middle Ages is the organic relationship of the work of each individual to the work

of society as a whole. Undoubtedly this goal is common to all socialists. But for Franzel the socialist idea is, in its realization, independent of the productive forces and class organization of society. Hence he does not wish to revert to the stage of medieval technology, but he is ready at every point to accept technical regressions in order to achieve a firmly knit, static, unproletarian society.

For the rest of us socialism is also the endeavor to eliminate the division of society into classes of exploiters and exploited, and to shape the premises on which humanity can live and develop in a way worthy of itself. The arrival at this goal is not independent of technique. That there are today not only socialist ideals but the possibilities of their realization is due to the fact that the productive abilities of men have reached a stage at which socialist ideals are capable of achievement. It is also due to the fact that the forms of production today urgently demand a centrally planned organization such as only Socialism can give them.

Thus Socialists cannot adopt Franzel's attitude toward technical development. As surely as capitalism has brought us nearer to the possibility of socialism, so surely it has brought us tremendous progress in development. Insofar as the liberal ideology of expanding capitalism called for these forward steps, so far we agree with that ideology. It is true that technological progress made it possible to support more people, to support them with less work, and to satisfy their demands more richly than ever before. Socialists have never shared the liberal illusion that these benefits of technical progress are automatically realized under the conditions of the capitalist system; they have always pointed to the fact that under this system crises and mass unemployment, and along with them misery instead of progress must be the lot of the masses. But that does not prevent them from hailing the development of production possibilities as such. Whoever adopts Franzel's attitude toward technology misses the real potentialities of socialism. In its place he clings to the fictitious possibilities of a close-knit social order based on split-up small scale production. In a society which suffers from its inability to utilize its riches he postulates the ideal of poverty instead of the rational utilization of wealth.

As Franzel does not understand the significance of industrial development for socialism, so for him no historical task of the prole-

tariat counterbalances the necessity of overcoming the existence of the proletariat. The working class is for him only a manifestation of capitalist misery, not even the potential picket lines of socialism. And so he can adopt the Nazi formula of "unproletarianizing." How he conceives this he does not say; one can only conjecture on the basis of his general agreement with the other Folksocialists.

Transformation of the proletarian element can only be achieved on the basis of organized large scale production; it cannot result from the conversion of the proletariat into small proprietors. The change can only consist in this: that with the assumption of the control of production by society of which the base and most active elements are the former proletariat, the proletariat become sharers in the responsibility for production; that, with the elimination of the crises and mass unemployment of capitalism, insecurity of existence will disappear; that with increasing possibilities of development for every individual on the basis of growing social wealth and the removal of the parasite classes, work will cease to be the *sign* of a class. So the transformation of the proletarian element consists in the abolition of wage labor, the conversion of the worker into a joint owner of organized general production, not into a small proprietor. It remains a decisive point that the active members of the new society of tomorrow are principally the proletariat of today.

But for Franzel the value of the "unproletarianizing" has a concrete cultural significance, even though it has no definite political-economic connotation. The values on which the matter really depends for him are cultural values—in the narrowest sense, aesthetic values. His real quarrel is not with capitalism, but with the cheap culture produced for mass consumption. His real heroes are not the fighters of the socialist workers' movement, but the artistic hermits who in the midst of the present chaos of culture, but quite shut off from it, quietly create for a small audience of the elite. It is his misfortune that the aristocrats of the spirit, to whom he appeals, whether it be Stefan George or Karl Kraus, have never had anything to do with socialism.

At this point the criteria according to which history is reinterpreted and socialism remoulded are evident. At this point the socialist Franzel reveals himself as an anti-proletarian socialist. At the beginning

of the chapter we stated that the socialist movement needs to be aware of its fundamental values. For this Franzel can serve as a *negative* background.

Franzel is well educated, even in Marxism. He can argue along Marxist lines that the proletariat, living in a bourgeois world, its ideas in subjection to this world, cannot produce the values of a socialist culture. But he can give no argument, but his personal feeling, that the socialist heaven is realized in the aesthetic-aristocratic life of a few. If it is not possible to anticipate socialist culture, nevertheless, significant values emerge from the conditions of the struggle for socialism, the struggle which the proletarian masses are waging. It is here that the spirit of solidarity in its present manifestation is to be found; here is a will for freedom which is no longer merely liberal; here is the struggle for the emancipation of man as it really expresses itself. Socialism will not be brought about by having the productions of cultural hermits unproletarianize the world. The proletariat has undertaken the task of transforming itself by transforming society.

The task of the struggle for socialism is not the task of the working class alone. The most conscious, most active socialists may come from all groups of society to the socialist movement, but its principle support can only be the working class. The proletariat needs in its struggle not only allies, it needs intellectual experts of all kinds in their own ranks. But it needs them to help in its own task as a socialist movement. It needs no intellectuals who deny these tasks. The situation of the workers' movement is hard; many today may doubt, waver, veer off on single issues, but Franzel does not waver any more.

VI. FOLKSOCIALISM AND THE COMING WAR

IN PERIODS when decisive struggles are in the making transitional tendencies are particularly numerous and particularly dangerous. We are living in just such a period. Folksocialism is a transition tendency.

The chief token of the European situation today is the obvious trend toward the creation of international class-fronts. The Folksocialists are right to speak not only of German but also of European questions. It is more than likely that the fate of Europe will be de-

cided in the next war; that this war will decide whether Europe will be a free federation of socialist nations or a subjugated militarily controlled colony of German fascism.

In the period of preparation for the war the struggle is the struggle for the building of fronts. The forces of the workers' movement range themselves with increasing clarity, overcoming all inner contradictions, in the front for the defense of peace and democracy, in the front of the Soviet Union and its democratic allies. The goal of their struggle is to give this front, in all its sections a uniformly anti-fascist character, to strengthen it through this, and to make it the rallying point for the progressive forces of all nations.

Similarly the forces of European reaction are ranging themselves with increasing clarity, overcoming all inner contradictions, in the ranks of German fascism. Already the anti-Bolshevist alliance of the Catholic Church with Hitler, and the tendencies toward a central-European block of dictatorships are obvious. It is this front which unchained the war of the Spanish bourgeoisie, and which supports the rebels; which in every country is waging an annihilating war against socialist forces.

In this situation it is good to speak of the unity of Europe, to proclaim it as a goal. In this situation it is dangerous untruth to propagate the illusion that this unity can be achieved through an agreement between the hostile fronts, through a peaceful obliteration of contradictions. With fascism there is only one form of compromise,—namely, capitulation.

The Folksocialists speak of the possibility of compromise. They speak of the fact that a European war would only be to the advantage of those evil extra-European powers, whose "inferior subjects" European states would thus become. They recommend this compromise in countries which have a democratic front. They point to the Catholic Church, one of the chief bulwarks of European reaction, as a force for European unity. They point to the monarchical concept of the Middle Ages as an idea fundamental to the unification of Europe. In this they speak the language of the Austrian reaction, which has already made its peace with Hitler.

In such a difficult question we do not wish to do anyone injustice.

A man whom we have recognized as our opponent in important issues is far from being on that score an agent of fascism. Because he is confused in important questions, he does not necessarily stand, in the European crisis, on the side of the deadly enemies of socialism. But it is our duty to point out those elements in his ideology which could lead him in that direction, and to force him to become clear about the logical consequences of what he advocates.

So far as this concerns the leaders and the problems of the German Socialist party of Czechoslovakia, it is not our affair. But so far as it concerns Germany it is our business.

German fascism has concentrated all its forces on preparation for war. This holds good not only for munitions, for economy, for foreign policy; it holds good for domestic policy as well. There is an internal preparation for war which has been carried forward for months; there are mass arrests of former functionaries of the workers' movement, who lived politically absolutely inactive. There is another aspect of this which is less well known: preparations for concessions to those who, in the event of war, are ready to fight for Hitler.

There are plans for concessions in the sphere of the workers' movement, in the direction of trade unionism. There is a group of former workers' functionaries, who are considered as willing to go forward, to cooperate in the case of war for the price of these concessions, and to contribute the confidence which their names convey. There are thoughts of a voluntary conciliation in the interest of the nation in the event of war.

Are the German Folksocialists aware how well their ideology accords with this type of thought? Do they understand that every one, however emphatically opposed to Hitler, who sets up the nation against the class, contributes arguments for this identification with Hitler in the decisive moment? Are they ready today to take a clear and consistent position with respect to this event?

Otto Strasser pointed to the comradeship at the front in the world war as the beginning of the revolution for which he strives. He has pointed to the Hitler system as the "Gironde of the German revolution." Today he denounces the war-like objectives of the Hitler regime. But the Jacobins, who denounced the war policy of the Girondists, were the most convinced defenders of the nation in the hours of danger,

—they defended, of course, *their* revolution. One can conclude from Strasser's position that as a nationally minded socialist one must work for the victory of Hitler's Germany in the next war, in the consciousness that victory will mean the completion of the German revolution. Strasser is willing to fight the Hitler regime with all means except those which contradict the essence of the goal. One can conclude from this that he will be ready to count the continuation of the Opposition in the war as incompatible with the essence of the goal of national security.

We do not draw this conclusion. In this question we have not the right to count anyone as an enemy who has not declared himself an enemy. But we see in advance the Hitler regime's preparation of concessions for this situation. We foresee the objective dangers of the Folksocialist ideology for this situation. We see that Strasser continues to speak of the war and of the building of a front as dangers which can still be avoided. He continues to evade taking a position in case the event should take place.

We put this question to Strasser's group as to all German Folksocialists: What position will you take when Hitler's attack, which he has been preparing for years, on the Soviet Union or on one of the democratic states in alliance with the USSR, becomes a reality? We want each section of the workers' movement which comes in contact with the Folksocialists to ask this question. For the war may be very near. No German revolutionary politics, no policy of alliance with the German opposition, can overlook the war question. In this matter it must be decided whether we have before us possible temporary travelling companions, able to set aside fundamental differences for the time, or enemies.

Strasser, in an article addressed to the Social Democratic Movement, once opposed to the idea of a people's front with the Communists the idea of invitation to form a national front against them. In the light of the war danger the seriousness of these alternatives becomes apparent. The general front of all anti-fascists becomes in the face of this danger an absolute necessity. All forces of democracy *will*, in the event of war, stand with the Soviet Union and also with the Communists in a general anti-fascist front. All who propagate a "national front" for the elimination of Moscow influences, like

Doriot in France, will also eliminate themselves. If we are not mistaken, Strasser has let the idea of the "national front" insinuate itself. Has he realized that in the war there will be only two fronts, for Hitler and against Hitler? It is time that at least all Social Democrats recognize this fact.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Theory and Practice of Socialism. John Strachey. Random House, New York. \$3.00.

The publishers of John Strachey's latest book, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, tell us that, "In this most challenging and persuasive book, John Strachey explains how the socialist economic and political system works.—It is Mr. Strachey's most important book since *The Coming Struggle for Power*." To point out, after such an introduction, that the book is a mere rehash of socialist and communist writings of the past century, with the addition of a few quaint concepts that are all Mr. Strachey's, is an ungracious, not to say an unkind act. It is, for all that, an act from which the conscientious reviewer will not shrink.

The Theory and Practice of Socialism is one of those compendiums that have become the recurrent product of all propaganda movements. Each new development in the class struggle, every new important development in the Soviet Union, makes necessary a restatement of socialist theory and practice in the light of the new situation. Such statements may be complete or incomplete, they may be frank or disingenuous, adequate or inadequate, but they are always a little less than epoch-making. Truth to tell, they belong to the hack-worn genus of political writing. Mr. Strachey's latest book is in this respect no exception to the rule.

What is old in it, is competently set forth. Even a genius would be hard-pressed to find new and dramatic ways of stating the theory of the class struggle, the theory of the materialistic conception of history or the theory of surplus value. The most interesting and valuable contribution that Mr. Strachey makes in this field is to add to his sketch of the history of socialist thought an analysis of the social origins of More's Utopia and of Winstanley's Digger movement. His pages here suggest that a socialist or communist historian could find a fruitful field for investigation there. For the rest he hews pretty close to the line set for him by Marx, Engels and the Webbs, whom he quotes extensively, and by Hillquit, Laidler, Boudin, Bax, Veil, Thomas and others whom he has evidently read and whom he does not mention.

Socialists will find Mr. Strachey's distinction between Socialism

and Communism interesting, if not convincing. It is especially amusing to note the absence of the bellicose and hypercritical tone toward the socialist movement that characterized *The Menace of Fascism* and *The Coming Struggle for Power*. The change is an obvious expression of the "new line" as set forth by the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern. In this book, whenever Mr. Strachey speaks of the Marxist position in any of the phenomena of capitalism, he couples "socialism and communism" together in loving embrace. But he must make a distinction between the two, and he does so in chapter XI, one of the quaintest, the most naive, the most curious pieces of special pleading that it has been my pleasure to read.

He defines Socialism as "a system of planned production for use in which the products are distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of the work done." (p. 121.) On the other hand, "under Communism, consumable goods and services will be distributed according to need, and work will be performed according to ability." (p. 120). "This," he says, is how Lenin used, and Stalin uses the two words Socialism and Communism. Marx, on the other hand, called a system of planned production for use which distributed its products in accordance with the quality and quantity of work done, the first stage of communism, rather than socialism. The usage adopted by Lenin and Stalin seems well established, however, *and it is convenient.*" (Italics mine.) (p. 121.)

This is a strained effort to distinguish between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. More than that, it is a subtle attempt to draw an invidious distinction between Socialism and Communism by making the former seem a primitive and the latter a more advanced form of collectivism. In fact, Mr. Strachey gives the game away by saying that "the usage seems well-established" and "convenient." Of course it is convenient in fostering the Communist Party myth that the socialist movement is generally less mature and advanced than the Communist Party. It is convenient at a moment when the workers of all lands outside Russia are once more looking to the Socialist movement to lead the revolution. It is convenient, but it is not historic, and not quite honest.

The fact is that the aims of socialism and of communism are identical. The difference between the Socialist and Communist Parties,

to which Mr. Strachey does refer in a footnote on page 121 is mainly a matter of tactics and not of objectives or of principles, except where the Communist Party insists on elevating a purely Russian experience to the level of a principle. Marx used the term "communist" because in his day "socialism" connoted the Utopian efforts of the Cabetists, the Owenites and the founders of communal colonies, and because a sect of German "True Socialists" had claim to the term to advocate something quite different from the proletarian control of industry. In the latter half of the 19th century, the Marxist movement preferred the word "socialism" because the term "communism" had come to be identified with the same communal experiments that the middle decades of the 19th century were exposing as inadequate. Lenin in 1917 reverted to the word "communism" to distinguish his party from the social-democratic forces that backed Kerensky, and to draw a sharp line of demarcation between the Second and Third Internationals. It never occurred to him that there was a difference in content between the "socialism" that he advocated before 1917 and the "communism" for which he stood thereafter. Nor is there a difference. The notion that "socialism" is a sort of halfway step toward "communism" is the product of the propaganda agencies of the Soviet Union, but has no basis in fact.

No Socialist will quarrel with the main outlines of Mr. Strachey's description of a socialist organization of production and distribution. They are drawn along lines long made familiar by his predecessors. Many will balk at his assumption that the Soviet Union may be taken as a model of how socialism is to work. The nature of the party dictatorship which Mr. Strachey assumes as necessary will make many hesitate to accept his picture of a Russia in which the workers really control their destinies. Many will refuse to accept his assertion that the workers' soviets have real power, his description of the origins of the Five Year Plan, or his optimistic belief that under the new constitution the soviets will be democratically elected.

When Mr. Strachey speaks of a new form of liberty and democracy in Russia, all except devotees, not of communism, but of the Communist Party, will wonder what he means, in view of the suppression of all opposition opinion in the Soviet Union, in view of the many sudden and far-reaching shifts in policy, both foreign and domestic,

determined from above. Mr. Strachey gives Leon Trotsky only a brief and casual mention when (p. 455) he presents a wholly inadequate and one-sided version of the controversy over "perpetual revolution" and "Socialism in one country." The Moscow trials, the cowardly official assassination of several of the Old Bolsheviks, the world wide campaign to destroy Trotsky's character, he does not mention at all. He evidently feels that the government's case is too weak to bear analysis. It does not occur to him, apparently, that his failure to discuss these questions is so great an indictment of Soviet liberty and democracy as to impugn it before the whole world. It does not seem to him important to explain why the new Soviet "liberty and democracy" require the judicial murder of opponents to overcome legitimate workers' opposition.

In his discussion of war and peace, Mr. Strachey allows himself to be misled by his allegiance to Stalinism into making a statement hard to reconcile with his allegedly Marxist convictions. On page 270 he says, "*An inevitable community of interest grows up between the relatively satisfied capitalist states which wish to keep the peace because they wish to keep the spoils, and the Soviet Union, which wishes to keep the peace because she has no need for spoils. Hence arise such instruments as the present Franco-Soviet Pact of mutual assistance.*" (Italics mine.) In this statement, Mr. Strachey quite unconsciously put his finger on the basic weakness of the present Soviet foreign policy. Instead of relying on a strong working class movement to ward off attacks, it finds a "community of interest" with imperialist capitalist states whose desire for peace is based on satiety. This is precisely the argument of the Socialist Parties in their opposition to the Franco-Soviet pact.

Mr. Strachey's book is in one respect a competent piece of hack writing. In another respect it is a none-too-successful piece of special pleading for the official Communist Party line. It will be successful in impressing the C. P. faithful; it may influence a few now sitting on the fence. It adds nothing to our knowledge. It is dull reading. It suffers from Mr. Strachey's own indecision: he never quite makes up his mind whether he is writing for the masses, or for the well-informed students of affairs. It has none of the fire of his earlier books, and for that reason it will serve mainly to dispel the myth of John Strachey.

DAVID P. BERENBERG

The Rise of Liberalism. Harold Laski. Harpers, New York. \$3.50.

All serious students of political and social theory owe a debt of gratitude to Harold J. Laski. His most recent book, *The Rise of Liberalism* shows that same penetrating insight and clear reasoning that made *Democracy in Crisis* and *The State in Theory and Practice* necessary data in any serious discussion of political problems. This book, the last of an able trilogy, needed to be written. Modern liberalism has too often been treated without its historical background being definitely worked out. Here you see it in its class relationship emerging with the new economic society which displaced the feudal order. The book thus supplements, clarifies and gives you the historical background of his two earlier studies.

Superficial students will probably prefer the earlier books. But the more profound student of social movements will appreciate the lucid unravelling of the past four centuries which reveals in a masterful way the factors which have made the disturbing present.

The book, though not in an obtrusive manner, is definitely Marxian in its thought pattern. The interpretation begins with the rise of a new class in western Europe. This new class becomes the bearer of new social influences, new economic demands, new political expressions, and new social values. All of these are woven together into the new philosophy of liberalism. Laski shows with fine historical analysis and Marxian insight that the new philosophy was historically connected with the new property-ownership with its demands for a philosophy to justify the institutional practices, values and habits necessary for this emerging society. Liberalism was that philosophy.

Liberalism, as Laski indicates, was the new ideology created to fit the requirements of a new world. This world felt itself cramped and fettered by the older feudal structure. Capitalism, the expression of the developing economic pattern, made new demands. It had outgrown the potentialities of production within the older system. It needed philosophical justification of new practices developing from a changed economy. Laski has analyzed with illuminating skill the changes beginning to appear in the sixteenth century and reaching their triumph three centuries later. The movement from status to contract—from

the prestige and privilege of birth to those of wealth ownership; from the theologically controlled and religiously motivated man to the scientific and secular outlook with pursuit of wealth as the chief motive of human activity; the rise of the new political realism expressed by Machiavelli, and of a new internationalism expressed by Gortius; all these are woven skillfully together in this informing book. One sees here a new frame of reference receiving acceptance. Secular interpretations become the order of the day. A new liberty develops—a liberty no longer fettered by social controls of guild, or church or society, but controlled and fettered, nevertheless, but, now, in the context of property. To this drama of change Locke, Voltaire, Adam Smith, Burke and a host of others make their contribution and help to shape the new doctrine of liberalism and bring about its triumph.

The high excellence of this work will be admitted by all students, even by those who deny his class analysis of liberalism and the implication of his intellectual approach. All those, and their number is increasing, who feel the limitations and inadequacy of the nineteenth century historiographic approach of Ranke and his followers will welcome a volume which shows the superior possibilities of Marxian analysis. With a definite point of view, but at the same time with no neglect of materials or ignoring of difficulties, Laski has revealed the methodological excellence of his integrating philosophy.

ROYAL G. HALL